



European Commission

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Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe

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two new Regional Advisory Councils

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a clearer and more accessible CFP

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Shows and exhibitions

• Seafood 2006, Brussels (Belgium), 9-11 May 2006

The yearly Seafood Exhibition is Europe's biggest gathering of processors and distributors of fishery and aquaculture products. The European Commission will host an information stand.

> For more information:

Tel: +1 (0) 207 842 55 04

E-mail: food@divcom.com

Web site: <http://www.euroseafood.com>

• Aqua 2006, Florence (Italy), 9-13 May 2006

After the success of Aqua 2000 (Nice), the European Aquaculture Society and the World Aquaculture Society are teaming up again for a new event. Aqua 2006 will combine an international exhibition with a series of conferences on the current state of play in the aquaculture business.

> For more information:

Tel: +32 59 32 38 59

E-mail: ae2006@aquaculture.cc

Web site: <http://www.was.org/>

• Fishing 2006, Glasgow (United Kingdom), 17-19 May 2006

This annual exhibition in Glasgow presents a wide range of fishing equipment. Commercial fishermen will find everything they need on display.

> For more information:

Tel: +44 (0) 20 70 17 46 61

E-mail: leonard.field@informa.com

Web site: <http://www.heighwayevents.com/>

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Note to readers

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Bilateral agreements: from access to partnership

We live in an increasingly open and interdependent world, and this is also true for fisheries. The aims of the Common Fisheries Policy as concerns conservation of resources and environmental protection cannot be limited to Community waters alone, but must also apply to our fishing activities outside EU waters. Many European fishing vessels operate beyond the Union's boundaries, and we therefore need to ensure that our attitude remains consistent with these principles wherever the fleet is active.

The Community's commitment to promote responsible fishing beyond its borders is primarily expressed through our active involvement in regional and multilateral organisations whose main role is to oversee fishing activities either in a particular area, or more broadly. These organisations focus on the management of high seas fisheries, straddling stocks and highly migratory species such as tuna. The negotiation and implementation of bilateral agreements between the Community and third countries in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres, which is the subject of this issue's Fact File, aim to provide the European fleet with access to the territorial waters of non-EU countries and to promote responsible fishing in the waters of those countries, in particular by developing the local fisheries sector.

These agreements come in a number of different forms. Agreements with developed states which have the means to exploit their own resources – mainly those in Northern Europe – usually take the form of a straightforward exchange of quotas. When it comes to the developing countries, however, the idea is not simply to obtain access to waters. Particularly since the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2002, the aim is to build real partnerships that can support their national fisheries policies – and approach which is in the interests of both the European industry and the partner countries themselves. As a result, these agreements deal only with “surplus resources”, i.e. fishery resources that are not already fully exploited by the countries concerned.

With this in mind, the Community also has to ensure that the provisions of fisheries partnership agreements are consistent with other EU policies in areas such as development, trade, consumer protection and so on.

As a result, the agreements we have with these countries have undergone a transformation. What were once nothing more than arrangements based on financial compensation have now become genuine partnerships for the development of sustainable and responsible fisheries. As a result, recent bilateral agreements do not simply seek to promote fishing activity, but also include measures to ensure better management of resources. Under these agreements financing is also allocated to training, fleet modernisation, infrastructure, the promotion of research to enhance knowledge of stocks, incentives to abandon non-selective fishing practices such as drift netting, and improved control and monitoring of fishing activities.

Special emphasis is also placed on the transparency of these agreements. Each agreement is published in the Official Journal of the European Union and is subject to a number of evaluations. As of today, the Community is the only entity in the world that publishes the fisheries agreements which it concludes with third countries.

This complex set of criteria means every agreement has to be thoroughly prepared in advance, and the prior discussions with internal partners (Member States, the sector and third countries) can be a very delicate business too. But only by taking on these challenges can we be sure that European fisheries activities around the world are consistent with the three imperatives they have to answer to: EU development policy, our internal fisheries policy, and the overriding aims of sustainable fisheries and environmental protection.

The Editor

◦ In the news

Two new Regional Advisory Councils are created

Two new Regional Advisory Councils have been created in the last few months. The Pelagic Stocks RAC was set up in August 2005 in the Netherlands, while the North-western Waters RAC became operational in September in Dublin. Together with the North Sea Regional Advisory Council created in November 2004, three RACs are thus up and running only one year after the introduction of this new participatory structure.

The Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) bring together fishery professionals and different stakeholders in the sector. An essential pillar of the Common Fisheries Policy, they have two aims: to involve the sector in the decisions that affect it and to promote dialogue between professionals and the other parties concerned by fisheries – scientists first and foremost, but also women's networks, environmental protection groups, consumer associations, etc. A forum for dialogue between all the different parties, the RACs can submit recommendations and suggestions to the Commission on all aspects of fisheries management in their zone or field of competence.

The European Union therefore decided to set up seven RACs, each focusing on a region or specific stocks (read the Fact File on RACs in *Fishing in Europe*, No 25, March 2005, pp. 4-8).

The initiative of creating a RAC must be taken by the sector itself. Its founders must bring together the parties representing the different interests concerned, agree on the body's operating arrangements and carry out the necessary formalities with the Commission and the Member States. This explains why all the RACs provided for by law were not created simultaneously.

Pelagic stocks

The second Regional Advisory Council to come into existence deals with pelagic stocks (horse mackerel, herring, mackerel and blue whiting). The European Association of Producers Organisations (EAPO) launched the process and its request was relayed by numerous Member States: Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom, whose sectors are now represented in the General Assembly and Executive Committee.

The geographical area of competence is tremendous, since it includes all EU waters except the Baltic and the Mediterranean. The participants created two working groups based on species: the first concerns herring and mackerel, and the second deals with other pelagic species.

This RAC has already submitted an opinion to Brussels on the action plan for mackerel in the North-east Atlantic (in collaboration with the pelagic sector for Norway and the Faeroe Islands) and a technical recommendation on codends.

North-western Waters

The BIM (Irish Sea Fisheries Board) hosts the Secretariat of the North-western Waters RAC. The official request for establishment had the backing of Belgium, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Indeed, the fleets of these Member States are active in the field of competence of this RAC, which covers the English Channel and the whole Western shoreline of the British Isles. The work of the Executive Committee is divided among four sub-regional working groups: West Scotland, West Ireland/Celtic Sea, English Channel and Irish Sea.

At its first General Assembly, this RAC clearly defined the priorities of its programme, based mainly on management issues such as multiannual plans, the ecosystem approach and scientific advice. The Executive Committee also intends to review other activities taking place at sea, including the dumping of waste, dredging, gas extraction and wind farms, all of which have important impacts on fishing activities in the region.

Four RACs still have to be established this year: for the Baltic, South-western waters, Mediterranean and high seas fisheries.

Practical information on the Secretariats of the two RACs:

The Pelagic Stocks RAC

Treubstraat 17 | PO Box 72 | 2280 AB Rijswijk | The Netherlands
Contacts: Rob Banning and Ingvið Harkes (Tel. +31 (0)70 336 9633, e-mail: info@pelagic-rac.org)

The North-western Waters RAC

BIM (Irish Sea Fisheries Board) | PO Box 12 | Crofton Road | Dun Laoghaire, Co. | Dublin | Ireland
Contacts: Patricia Comiskey and Michael Keatinge (Tel. +353 1 214 4100, e-mail: comiskey@bim.ie)

Fisheries agreements: partners in sustainable and responsible fishing

The European Union's competence for fisheries is not restricted to Community waters. Combating illegal fishing, participating in regional fisheries organisations and managing distant waters fishing also form part of the Common Fisheries Policy. It is in that context that the negotiation of fisheries agreements, which enable the Community fleet to operate in the waters of other countries, takes on considerable importance.

What is a fisheries agreement? It is a diplomatic agreement by which one state authorises another to fish in its national waters. This authorisation comes with certain conditions attached – in particular, financial conditions. These precise terms are renegotiated at regular intervals in the form of “protocols” each of which runs for a period of several years. Transparency is one of the features that distinguish the European Union's fisheries agreements: all the agreements and protocols entered into are published, so that citizens know exactly what has been decided on their behalf.

It all began in the 1960s and 1970s. Until then, the territorial authority of coastal countries went no further than 12 nautical miles from their shores. Beyond the 12-mile mark, no country could claim authority over the “high sea”. However, after World War II, the concept of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) emerged, referring to an area extending well beyond the 12-mile strip, in which the coastal state has certain economic rights such as the extraction of petrol or the exploitation of fish resources.

Initially equated with the continental shelf, the EEZ gradually came to be defined as a zone of up to 200 nautical miles (around 350 km) from shore. More and more states have created EEZs, which were given official international recognition in 1982 with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

As a result, a very high proportion of global fish stocks, which until then fell under the regime of the high seas, came to be governed by a patchwork of national regulations. To maintain access to certain stocks – notably African stocks they had fished since the colonial period –, the European Union Member States had to negotiate fisheries agreements with the coastal countries.

Since fisheries policy is a common policy of the European Union, the Commission has exclusive competence to negotiate such agreements, while consulting with the Member States and the sector. The Community fleet thus benefits from a network of agreements covering the EEZs of some 20 countries, in the Northern and Southern hemispheres alike.

These agreements are of considerable importance for the Union. Firstly, they enable the European industry to count on an additional yearly supply of some 2.5 million tonnes of fish, which represents around 40% of the catches of the Community fleet. Secondly, they provide employment for an estimated 40 000 European workers and opportunities for around 3 000 vessels. So they have a real economic impact.

Exchange of quotas or financial contribution

Every fisheries agreement is paid for either through an exchange of quotas (for agreements with Northern European countries, see p. 8) or through financial contributions (for agreements with Southern countries)¹. Financial compensation, to which both the Community and vessel owners contribute, is linked to the value of catches, the fishing possibilities obtained and the level of cooperation agreed between the two parties for the development of the third country's fisheries policy.

In July 2004, the Council decided that the share of the financial burden falling on the vessel owners should be gradually increased, so as to redress the imbalance between the private and public contributions to fisheries agreements. So for instance, in the agreement concluded recently with Gabon, the licence fee for vessel owners was increased from EUR 25 to 35 per tonne of tuna, while the European Union's share per tonne dropped from EUR 75 to 65. Under what are known as “mixed” agreements, the licence fee is set in proportion to the vessel's tonnage.

The objectives of sustainable and responsible fishing established by the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy are as relevant to distant waters as they are at home, as we will demonstrate in the following pages.

(1) Greenland is a special case. See p. 9.

- Partnering with developing countries for responsible fishing

Since developing countries do not fully exploit their fish resources, they allow other states to fish in their territorial waters in exchange for financial compensation. When these countries decide to establish political and economic relations with the Community on fisheries, agreements are negotiated to determine the access conditions. With the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2002, the European Union's aim is to transform these fisheries agreements with Southern countries into genuine partnerships for the development of sustainable and responsible fishing.

Catches by the European fleet fishing under these agreements come from surplus fish stocks, i.e. the part of the stock which the coastal state's fleet is not able to exploit. This exploitable surplus is evaluated as accurately as possible during conclusion of the fisheries agreements, based on scientific advice.

To gain access to such resources, the Union has concluded bilateral agreements with some 15 Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Ocean coastal countries, mainly African. With the development of tuna fishing in the central and western Pacific Ocean, however, agreements were also negotiated recently with certain island states in the region: Micronesia, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands.

Tuna first

Historically and quantitatively, tuna ranks first in the EU's fisheries agreements with Southern countries. The 15 protocols currently in force all contain provisions on this species. These agreements give European tuna fleets what could be called a "right of pursuit". Tropical tuna are highly migratory, travelling widely both through the high seas and close along the coasts. So as to be able to continue fishing without interruption when a school of tuna enters a coastal state's EEZ, the vessel must be authorised to operate there. It is therefore vital for European fleets working in these parts of the world to have fishing licences which cover the entire coast along which they operate.

As it is difficult to evaluate in advance the quantity of a highly migratory species that will be caught in any given place, the tuna agreements simply specify the number of vessels authorised to enter a third country's fishing ground. For example, the new tuna agreement with Gabon covers 24 seining vessels and 16 long liners, meaning that no more than 24 seining vessels and 16 long liners from the European fleet may be found in Gabon's EEZ at any one time. In return for this right, Europe pays Gabon a total of EUR 860 000 a year. As part of this payment, each vessel pays a licence fee calculated on the basis of a lump-sum tonnage (based on the average catches in previous years). If this tonnage is exceeded, vessel owners pay a supplement in proportion to their catches.

As a rule, quotas (where these exist) and other forms of catch limitation are determined multilaterally, within the competent regional tuna fisheries organisation, and any such stipulations must naturally be taken into account when bilaterally agreeing levels of fishing effort. For instance, the new protocol with Comoros provides for 8 fewer long liner licenses than the previous agreement, in accordance with the recommendations of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. Moreover, this decrease in tuna fishing effort is a feature of all the recently renewed protocols, reflecting the drive to protect fish resources. The agreement signed last December with Gabon also reduces the number of licenses by 40% (for more details on tropical tuna fishing, see *Fishing in Europe* No 23, September 2004).

Mixed agreements

Over the last 20 years or so, technical progress in refrigerated transport and changing patterns of European consumer demand have led our fleet to pursue other tropical stocks than tuna. When a fisheries agreement contains provisions on species other than tuna, it is referred to as a mixed agreement. The European Union currently has six mixed agreements with Southern countries. EU vessels catch deep-water species in Senegal and Mauritania, for example, shrimps in Guinea-Bissau, various demersal and pelagic species in Morocco, etc.

For these species, the fisheries agreements cover the total capacity of the fleet authorised to enter the third country's EEZ, expressed in gross registered tonnage.

Promoting responsible fishing

With its 2002 reform, however, the European Union decided not to limit its fisheries agreements with Southern countries to the acquisition of fishing possibilities in their territorial waters. Since that date, the UE has made changes that transform these agreements into real partnerships.

The idea is to help the developing countries to put in place their own fisheries policies that can help them meet their aim of economic development while protecting fish resources. Indeed, as everywhere else in the world,



All the European Union's fisheries agreements with Southern countries concern tuna. Some also include provisions on other species.

a number of tropical stocks, including certain species of tuna, are showing signs of depletion. The establishment of a resource management policy is therefore as vital in the South as it is in the North.

When concluding an agreement, the two parties now begin with a general review of the situation. The fisheries policy of the coastal country is evaluated, along with the country's needs and fishing capacities, as well as the state of the resources in relation to sustainable fishing objectives. On this basis, the surplus that the coastal country is willing to allocate to the EU fishing fleet is then determined.

Any dangers fishing may pose to resources or the environment are also carefully examined so that remedial measures may be adopted. Wherever possible, and in the mutual interests of both parties, the partnership agreement will favour measures to promote the creation of joint ventures, the transfer of know-how and technologies, and investments in management capacities.

Responsible fishing with substantial means

Every new agreement concluded (or protocol renewed) thus contains a "partnership" chapter. The two parties agree to allocate a share of the financial compensation paid by the European Union to the introduction of a fisheries policy in the partner country, which is free to determine its own priority areas for action. In practice, such priority is often placed on control and surveillance issues, vocational training for seafarers, support for scientific observation mechanisms and support for private and public investments in the sector.

In the new agreement with Gabon, for example, 60% of the financial contribution paid by the Union will be spent on development of the local fisheries policy. The budgets funded in this way will be overseen by an EU-Gabon Joint Committee whose priorities are established by the text of the agreement: evaluation of Gabonese stocks, leadership in fisheries cooperation between states bordering the Gulf of Guinea, enhanced monitoring of fishing activities and creation of partnerships between private European and Gabonese companies in the sector.

In the new protocol with Comoros, 60% of the European financial compensation of EUR 2.3 million will be allotted to Comoran fisheries policy. Here too, a joint committee will determine the use of the funds.

And as a last example, the new protocol with Morocco allocates EUR 14 million of Europe's EUR 36 million annual contribution to projects in support of the local fisheries sector: modernisation and restructuring of the small-scale fisheries fleet; financial compensation for the elimination of drift nets; the development of research, training and fisheries organisations; improvement of landing infrastructure; etc.

With this new type of partnership, the European Union intends to contribute to its partner countries' development while promoting the objectives of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy to secure sustainable and responsible fishing.

- Northern waters: exchanges which matter to both sides

Norway, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands, which are geographically very close to the EU, have important fishing and fish processing economies. Their territorial waters are home to stocks for which Community waters cannot meet Community demand. At the same time, these countries also have significant need of certain species which are found in European Union waters. The reciprocity agreements concluded with them are therefore highly advantageous to both parties: the Community fleet can fish for certain species in their territorial waters, in exchange for which vessels from Norway, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands can fish for other species in Community waters.



The European Union's fisheries agreements with Northern European countries offer advantageous exchanges of quotas, opening up important areas of activity for the Community fleet.

Let's start with the example of the Community's fisheries agreement with Norway, the most important the EU has concluded with a third country.

Part of the agreement concerns the sharing of fishing possibilities for stocks in certain zones of the North Sea (cod, haddock, saithe, whiting, plaice, mackerel and herring). Another part organises the exchange of quotas between the two parties. Provisions agreed during the latest negotiations give the Community fleet the right to catch 61% of its quota for blue whiting and 62 000 tonnes¹ of Atlantic-Scandinavian herring in Norwegian waters, in exchange for granting Norway reciprocal rights in Community waters. Beginning this year, the agreement also authorises the landing and transit of certain Community catches on Norwegian territory, which greatly facilitates operations for fisherman working in that part of the world. This provision may even be extended to other stocks in the future.

This example shows how agreements between the Community and certain countries in Northern Europe are structured by two fundamental concerns: the common management of certain stocks, and reciprocity in the form of an exchange of quotas. This exchange is negotiated between the two parties annually, once fishing possibilities have been set, in line with their own interests.

The need for this type of agreement originated with the extension of fishing zones to 200 miles. Before this development, certain species were found in the high seas and were thus accessible to all. After the extension, these stocks were now located within European Union waters (or the waters of the Northern countries). So as to enable both the EU and these third countries to continue their fishing activities, operators had now to be authorised to fish in the other party's waters.

Such exchange agreements are extremely complex and technical. In some cases, it is the same species that is being offered by both sides, as with blue whiting in the

agreement with the Faeroe Islands. This is because the quotas in question concern different stocks (located in different places) or by-catches of certain target species (fishing for a species caught simultaneously with another for which a quota is exchanged).

A second feature of the exchanges is the sharing of certain stocks. Since the fishing grounds of the two parties to the agreement are adjacent, it can be necessary to share certain stocks which naturally move between these two areas. This is the case for Western mackerel, for instance, for which the sharing of the quota is negotiated as part of the EU's annual agreement with the Faeroe Islands.

Other reciprocity agreements

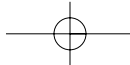
The same principles of exchange and sharing govern our fisheries agreements with the Faeroe Islands and Iceland, two other non-EU European countries.

The fisheries agreement with Iceland concerns only two species. The Community fleet has a quota for redfish in Iceland's waters. In exchange, the EU gives Iceland part of its quota for capelin from Greenland.

Under the agreement with the Faeroe Islands, the EU grants that country's fleet part of its quotas for industrial fishing. In exchange, British, French, Dutch, German and Danish vessels have access to Faeroese waters to fish for quotas of whitefish, blue whiting and mackerel.

These fisheries agreements with the countries of Northern Europe are very important for the EU. Not only do they open up important activity zones for the Community fleet, but they also establish good neighbourly relations with major fishing countries, which are also important trading partners for the EU as a whole.

(1) These 62 000 tonnes account for 100% of EU's quota.



Greenland: supporting local development

The European Union fisheries agreement with Greenland is a special case. Since it withdrew from the Community in 1985, this territory has enjoyed a fisheries agreement whereby, in exchange for financial compensation, the EU fleet can exploit part of Greenland's stocks. Since 2003, this fisheries agreement has been evolving into a true partnership agreement.

To understand the Union's fisheries relations with Greenland, we need to see them in historical perspective. Greenland joined the Community in 1973, as a region of Denmark. In 1979, its internal status changed with the implementation of the home-rule law and in 1982 the population chose to withdraw from the Community. Since that time, Greenland has had the status of an OCT (Overseas Countries and Territories) associated with the European Union, and it is this status which provides the basis for fisheries relations between the two parties. OCT status permits genuine cooperation between the Community and Greenland in their mutual interest: fishing is an important economic activity for Greenland and maintaining its fishing activities in Greenland's waters is important for the Community.

Annexed to the Treaty of Withdrawal from the Community is a "Protocol on Special Arrangements for Greenland". The Protocol gives Greenland's fishery products unlimited and duty-free access to the Community market provided the Community is granted satisfactory possibilities for access to Greenland's waters under a fisheries agreement. Nor is this agreement confined to fisheries matters, for it is also intended to serve Greenland's development objectives. As a result, Greenland has continued to receive the same level of financing it received when it was a member of the Community.

Development of the agreement

Since the first fisheries protocol, however, the state of the fish stocks in Greenland's waters has changed considerably and the rate of quota uptake has declined.

Since the annual financial compensation of EUR 42 million cannot be changed before the protocol's expiry in 2006, the Commission proposed at the time of the mid-term review of the protocol (2001-2006) that the financial contribution be rationalised and divided into two separate allocations.

The first allocation is for the purchase of fishing possibilities (EUR 31 million). Given the need to reduce quotas for stocks showing signs of depletion, such as cod, these were replaced by additional quotas for non-problematic species (Greenland halibut, Atlantic halibut, shrimps), new quotas for snowcrab, and experimental fisheries that could result in quotas for new species.

The second allocation is for a partnership for the development of Greenland's fisheries sector (EUR 11 million). Here the particular emphasis is on improving scientific advice, which is the essential foundation for ensuring responsible fishing.

In the future, the European Union intends to develop the agreement with Greenland in line with the partnership that has been established. It is essential for the EU to encourage sustainable fishing in Greenland's waters while supporting the development of this neighbouring territory. Doing so will also result in greater consistency with the Community's partnership agreements with the Southern countries.

The EU's bilateral fisheries agreements with third countries

Fisheries agreement	Start	End
Faeroe Islands	Annual renewal	
Iceland	Annual renewal	
Norway	Annual renewal	
Greenland	01.01.2001	Protocol: 31.12.2006 Agreement: 01.02.2007
Guinea Bissau	16.06.2001	15.06.2006
Mauritania	01.08.2001	31.07.2006
São Tomé and Príncipe	01.06.2002	31.05.2006
Senegal	01.07.2002	30.06.2006
Kiribati	16.09.2003	15.09.2006
Mauritius	03.12.2003	02.12.2007
Guinea Conakry	01.01.2004	31.12.2008
Madagascar	01.01.2004	31.12.2006
Mozambique	01.01.2004	31.12.2006
Côte d'Ivoire	01.07.2004	30.06.2007
Comoros	01.01.2005	31.12.2010
Seychelles	18.01.2005	17.01.2011
Gabon	03.12.2005	02.12.2011
Cape Verde	01.09.2006	31.08.2011
Morocco	2006 *	4 years after date of entry into force
Micronesia	2006 *	3 years after date of entry into force
Solomon Islands	2006 *	3 years after date of entry into force
Tanzania	2006 *	3 years after date of entry into force
Peru	Being negotiated	

* being adopted

Profile



Carina Rönn is campaigning for recognition of the role that fishermen's wives play in the fishing economy, a mission that has prompted her to set up the association Österbottens Fiskarförbund.

Fishermen's wives: the future of coastal communities

Carina Rönn, aged 44, is an activist in the Nordic fishermen's wives network. The aim of this network is to build solidarity between women from different coastal regions, who share the same living conditions and experience the same problems. She analyses the future of communities that live in large measure from fishing, based on the role women can play.

Communities without women?

Her first observation is that it is mostly women who pursue higher studies. And if coastal and fishing communities cannot offer them work that matches their qualifications, the women will not be staying. They will not be willing to live in coastal regions if they cannot put their skills to work. And what will their fishermen husbands do: stay on their own or follow their wives? What will become of these communities without women?

According to Carina Rönn, the survival of fishing communities therefore resides in a more far-reaching regional policy, based on better prospects for women. Development and employment opportunities for women must be part of regional planning and deserve special consideration in the decision-making process. Development opportunities must come from a wider vision of fisheries-related activities. *"Fishing is a centuries-old cultural heritage and a vital base. We need to keep that in mind when we look towards the future. Fishing is not limited to resource management and technical measures based solely on profitability"*, she observes.

She also has an opinion on the way European fisheries policy is developed. *"Future decisions affecting the fisheries sector and coastal fishing have to give a greater say to stakeholders. This is true for both resource management and economic administration."*

An extensive network

To heighten awareness of these issues, Carina Rönn and her fellow activists want to build up the network of organisations of fishermen's wives and of women from coastal regions in all the Nordic countries, an initiative originally launched by *Norges Fiskekvinnelag* (Norwegian Fishermen's Wives) and by the Council of Nordic Ministers. She works through *Österbottens Fiskarkvinnor* (Ostrobothnia Fishermen's Wives) and *Nordiska kyst- og fiskarkvinder* (Nordic Coastal Fishermen's Wives). She also participated in the European project "Women", which brought together participants from five European countries.

What is interesting about this type of network is that by sharing their experiences, women can enhance their own development potential for the good of the

community where they live. By organising into networks, they can have more of an impact on political processes, including in international cooperation institutions (the Nordic parliaments, the Nordic Council and the Council of Nordic Ministers, for example).

"The strength of this network lies in the fact that women live in the same conditions, which creates a common base favouring mutual comprehension and support", she notes.

Northern and Southern Europe

On cooperation in a European context, rather than just between the Nordic countries, Carina Rönn recognises the considerable gap between conditions in Northern and Southern Europe. She is nevertheless convinced that Nordic women's progress towards equality will also help improve women's situation in the South of the EU. *"Equality is essential to the development of communities. After all, women make up half of society and are a tremendous resource"*, she explains.

Who is Carina Rönn?

She is married and has two children, a daughter aged 8 and a son aged 11. She lives near Vaasa, where she was born, and comes from a family of generations of fishermen. Carina has a degree in marine biology and used to teach. She now works for the advisory organisation *Österbottens Fiskarförbund* (Confederation of Fishermen of Ostrobothnia). She is Finn-Swedish, to use the local expression. In certain regions of Finland, the Finnish population has maintained close ties with the Swedish culture since the days when Swedish fishermen settled along the coast of Finland. This is the case in Ostrobothnia, a region encompassing several municipalities on the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia. Carina Rönn lives in a village of 1 100 inhabitants, Maxmo, around 30 km north of Vaasa, a town of 60 000. She is a member of the Town Council of this group of islands situated on the western coast of Finland, in the Gulf of Bothnia, opposite Sweden and Norway.

• In the news

Simplifying the Common Fisheries Policy

The Commission is engaged in a process of legislative and administrative simplification. Its aim is to make laws more comprehensible and administrative procedures simpler and more accessible. The areas most concerned by simplification are those related to businesses, the environment, health, consumption, agriculture and fisheries. Last December, the Commission launched its Action Plan 2006-2008 to simplify the Common Fisheries Policy.

Since its founding, the European Union has adopted numerous laws, and these sometimes overlap, are superimposed, cancel or complement each other, to say nothing of their permanent interaction with Member States' laws. It is not necessarily easy for citizens or businesses to find their way through this complex network of legislation. To remedy this problem, the European Commission launched the simplification process, with which the CFP is associated.

During reflection on simplification, the Commission raised a number of questions, such as: Is it really necessary for fishermen to submit the same report to three different administrations? Do ministers really have to have an opinion on how nets are rigged? Should all fishing possibilities for all Community waters still be set at the same time? Does the term "fishing vessel" have the same meaning in all regulations? Is a paper fishing licence still necessary in the age of electronic registers? Are certain measures best left to the discretion of the Member States? These questions and more will have to be answered during the simplification process under way.

Simplification of the CFP aims to make legislation clear and precise, to give fishermen and national administrators access to concise and easy-to-understand information and to reduce the workload that currently falls on fishermen and national administrations due to the complexity of regulations.

To be effective, simplification cannot be conceived without the input of professionals in the sector and the national administrations, the parties most concerned. All were given the opportunity to express their realities and expectations, and to bring up questions.

Action Plan 2006-2008

On the basis of the views expressed, the Commission determined the areas of priority for simplification and the means and instruments to be used, and decided "who does what".

Two areas of priority were established. The first is stock conservation policy, with particular emphasis on the development of catch and fishing effort limitations, technical measures and statistics. The second is control of fishing activities and all related matters: regulations, computerisation (in particular automatic data transmission), reporting obligations and licence management.

The keys to simplification

- **Establishing a hierarchy** – In fisheries, political and technical aspects are very close. They have to be better distinguished, with political decisions left to the Council and technical decisions to the Commission, after consulting the Member States.
- **Consulting** – To be effective, a consultation of the sector has to be conducted within a timeframe that allows real participation and is far enough upstream of the decision, even before the drafting of an initial legislative text.
- **Evaluating** – Prior and systematic evaluation of the possible consequences of any new rules will clarify the debate, lead to better understanding of arbitration and facilitate its acceptance by the players concerned.
- **Targeting** – Regulations must concern related targets or matters. For example, fishing possibilities for the Baltic Sea can be decided separately from those for the Atlantic.
- **Improving drafting** – Legislative texts must be drafted precisely but in a way that is understandable to the stakeholders concerned. Clear rules facilitate full and fair enforcement.
- **Disseminating** – Information on regulations cannot be limited to institutional channels alone, but must go directly to the players concerned, through associations, Regional Advisory Councils, web sites, the development of codes of conduct, etc.

By giving priority to conservation and control, the Commission hopes to improve the working conditions of both fishermen and civil servants in the sector and to favour effective, efficient and transparent application of the CFP.

On methodology, the Commission proposes to act on the basis of a three-year action plan (2006-2008), a blueprint that describes the measures to be put in place, point by point, for each area of simplification. In all these matters, the Commission will apply the simplification principles (see box) for all legislation in the development stage or being revised and, in some cases, to laws already in force. In all cases, simplification must seek to meet the needs of its two principal beneficiaries: fishermen and the public administrations charged with fisheries.

The Action Plan still has to be approved by the Council and Parliament before entering into force.

In brief

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> TACs and quotas 2006: reconciling biological and economic imperatives

As they do every year in December, Europe's Fisheries Ministers met in Council to set fishing possibilities for the year 2006. At the heart of these difficult discussions were scientists' findings that resources are continuing to decline, due primarily to overfishing. The debate focused on high-risk stocks, notably cod (scientists are so far not seeing any results from cod recovery plans), deep water species and North Sea sole and flatfishes.

The Council decided to approve reductions in days at sea for most North Sea, West of Scotland, Irish Sea and Celtic Sea fisheries. However, certain derogations to the system for the management of days at sea are authorised where activities present only a slight risk to cod.

In general, catches will have to be lower in 2006, even if some TACs were raised, e.g. Norway lobster (around 30% depending on the area) and plaice in the English Channel and Irish Sea (+17%). For certain stocks whose state is particularly alarming, reductions in TACs can be important and are matched with measures imposing a reduction of fishing effort.

The Council reviewed the management of species with short life cycles (anchovy, species caught for industrial purposes) and adopted certain preliminary decisions that will be reviewed once more complete information on fishing possibilities becomes available in the course of the year.

Anchovy in the Bay of Biscay – Catches of this stock, on which a fishing ban was imposed on an urgent basis in 2005, are limited to 5 000 tonnes, but fishing will not be allowed to start up again until 1 March 2006. If scientists determine in May 2006 that spawning stock biomass at spawning time is less than 28 000 tonnes, however, the Commission will stop fishing activities.

Sandeels – Fishing activity will be allowed to resume in 2006 following a ban in 2005, but fishing effort will be limited to 20% of 2004 levels.

Cod in the North Sea, Irish Sea, Celtic Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat, West of Scotland and English Channel – TACs for these stocks are cut by 15%. This reduction is matched with a reduction of days at sea that also applies to fishing grounds where cod is a by-catch, currently accounting for 60% of cod catches.

Sole stocks in the Bay of Biscay – The Council adopted the recovery plan proposed by the Commission, based on a reduction of catches until such time as safe biological limits, set at 13 000 tonnes in 2008, are restored.

Baltic cod – The Council decided to introduce a recovery plan for Baltic cod stocks as soon as possible. Meanwhile, TACs for Eastern (45 000 t) and Western (28 000 t) Baltic stocks were raised slightly over 2005 levels. The period of closure, on the other hand, was prolonged in the Western Baltic (91 days compared to 61 in 2005) and reduced in the Eastern Baltic (119 days compared to 138 in 2005). In addition,

the three areas closed to fishing throughout 2005 will now only be off limits during the spawning period, from May to October.

Baltic flounder and turbot – A closure period was introduced for these stocks: three and a half months for flounder and two months for turbot.

Deep water species – The Council strengthened measures relating to these fragile species. First, the fishing effort for 2006 is reduced by a further 10% compared to 2003 levels, with the Council and Commission agreeing to re-evaluate this measure in the course of 2006. Second, the use of gill nets is banned at depths of over 200 metres in North-western waters, a measure that may be revised in the future in the light of scientific advice.

Blue whiting – Under an agreement concluded on 16 December by the North-east Atlantic coastal countries (European Union, Faeroe Islands, Norway and Iceland) setting quotas for blue whiting, fishing possibilities are reduced for the Community fleet (EU TAC of 400 000 t). The Council approved a decision dividing the EU's total allowable catches among the Member States. It will be reviewed subsequently and modified if need be.

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